

# A BIBLICAL VIEW OF THE END TIMES

## Intro Lesson 2: THE DISCIPLINE OF WATCHFULNESS

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### A. INTRODUCTION

1. Question: "What does it mean to live faithfully as a Christian?"
2. Faithful living means:
  - Loving our neighbors (and our enemies)
  - Demonstrating forgiveness for wrongs done to us
  - Having a passion for the Gospel and for proclaiming the message of salvation
  - Engaging in regular fellowship with other believers in Jesus Christ
3. Faithful living is hard:
  - Living humbly and completely in a relationship with Jesus Christ
  - Not living according to a pattern of rituals
  - Persisting in disciplines that demonstrate our proper relationship with our Lord and Savior
  - Living according to the discipline of watchfulness

### B. WHAT IS WATCHFULNESS?

1. While watching for ALL things related to the End Times, we are primarily watching for the Rapture, our great hope:
  - The Rapture is NOT the same event as Jesus Christ's Second Coming.
  - The Rapture is that unique event in which God supernaturally removes--literally 'snatches'--His church, His Bride, FROM this planet to be with Him where He now is (**Cf. John 14:3**)
  - The Rapture is imminent, is not dependent on any specific prophecy, and precedes the 7-year Tribulation.
2. A few verses help us better understand the attributes of watchfulness:
  - (**Cf. Titus 2:13**) *"...waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ."*
    - One key element is *waiting*. Nobody likes to wait--but it's part of our duty to wait *well*.
    - Two other elements are being hopeful and anticipating.
  - (**Cf. Luke 19:13**) *"Calling ten of his servants, he gave them ten minas, and said to them, 'Engage in business until I come.'" (A parable of Jesus')*
    - The master of the house leaves for a while to claim his kingship.
    - His servants do not know when he will return, but they are given instructions concerning talents and resources that the master gave them before he left:
      - ✓ They are to stay busy, "occupy," work, and engage in responsible activities while watching for the master's return.

- ✓ Being watchful does not mean we check out of life (no pajamas on a rooftop). We are to wake up every day and commit to the tasks and responsibilities at hand.
- ✓ It's a bit like those who rebuilt the walls of Jerusalem in the book of **Nehemiah**. They carried bricks and materials in one hand and a sword in the other. They stayed on task, were diligent and aware, and did two things at once.
- ✓ Being watchful means we must multi-task.
- **(Cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:6)** *"So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober."* (From last week)
  - We are to be awake and aware. Like a sentry, always patrolling. We cannot be dull-witted or uninformed.
  - We are to be self-controlled:
    - ✓ This is the essence of being sober.
    - ✓ We need to exercise prudence in our choices and actions.
    - ✓ It is not a time to lose control or to be irrational. Being watchful means to be intentional and personally responsible.
- **(Cf. Ezekiel 33:3-9)** (From last week)
  - Being watchful means to speak out:
    - ✓ We have a responsibility to warn others of what is coming.
    - ✓ Noah was a "preacher of righteousness," (**2 Peter 2:5**), and **Hebrews 11:7** states that Noah *"...prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world..."*
    - ✓ The point is made that Noah was neither silent in word or deed. He was watchful for God's judgment and warned people, demonstrating his own faithfulness by his actions.
  - It is not good enough to be watchful for the sake of ourselves only. We are called to be watchful for the sake of others, too.

### C. WHY IS WATCHFULNESS A DISCIPLINE?

1. Watchfulness is labor: **(Cf. 1 Corinthians 15, specifically v.58)** *"Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."*
  - The bulk of this chapter is about the resurrection and the Rapture.
  - **V.58** begins with the word, "Therefore." Whenever you see the word "therefore" in Scripture, go back a few verses to see what it's *there for*.
  - In anticipation of the Rapture, Paul says we need to "stand firm," be immovable, and be devoted to "labor" and to the "work of the Lord."
    - To "stand firm" and "labor" takes effort, intention, exertion, discipline.
    - I don't labor to eat chocolate cake. I labor NOT to eat it.
2. Watchfulness requires taking a stand:
  - We must stand against those and be different from those who belittle and scorn our Biblical instructions.

- **(Cf. 2 Peter 3:3-4)** (From last week) *“...in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, following after their own lusts, and saying, “Where is the promise of His coming? For ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue just as they were from the beginning of creation.”*
- We live in a time when truth is not popular.
  - It takes discipline to seek out the truth.
  - It also takes discipline to proclaim the truth against the currents of derision and scorn.
  - Truth suppression takes place in the church, too! Many churches mock the themes of Biblical prophecy, and many church leaders refuse to teach these doctrines responsibly.
- I have personally experienced the dynamics of **2 Peter 3:3-4** from churches, from church leaders, and from other Christians:
  - I’ve been told I am teaching on themes which are fringe, sensational, or unimportant.
  - I’ve been told that I’m wrong to believe in the pre-Trib Rapture, the Millennial Kingdom, and the Biblical significance of modern-day Israel.
  - Even in the process of setting up this class series, I endured multiple confrontations from individuals who belittled goals of our class and expressed anger for pursuing them.
  - The point is, it takes discipline and conscious resolve to be watchful and to proclaim the truth with diligence and focus.

**NOTE:** I want to shift gears now and review some elements of God’s Word--and various developments in our world today--that should prompt us to grasp that our remaining time on this planet is very short.

#### **D. SOME IMPORTANT POINTS:**

1. I am **not** a date-setter.
  - I am not going to encourage YOU to be a date-setter either.
  - I believe, concerning the Rapture, the Bible teaches that *“No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” (Cf. Matt. 24:36; Mark 13:32)*
  - Jesus was fully God as well as fully man. In this state of incarnation, He voluntarily gave up certain rights that had been His in heaven and restricted some of the exercise of His divine nature:
    - **(Cf. Philippians 2:6-8)** *“Who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but EMPTIED HIMSELF, taking the form of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, He HUMBLed HIMSELF and became obedient to death – even death on a cross.”*
    - Jesus renunciated some of His divine privileges, and so He stated – at that time – that *“only the Father”* knew *“about that day or hour.”*

- I have zero doubt that Jesus, now fully exalted and glorified in heaven, knows all these details perfectly.

2. We ARE called to recognize the times we live in:

- **(Cf. Matt. 24:32-33)** *“Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its branches become tender and sprout leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see all these things, you will know that He is near, right at the door.”* Notice the reference to a change of seasons and an appeal to discern what is happening *with that change*.
- **(Cf. Luke 12:56)** Jesus rebukes the religious leaders of His day for their inability to know the signs of the times in which they live): *“You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time?”*
- It does not mean we can pinpoint dates, but it does mean we should recognize an ever-decreasing window of time in which we should be expectant.

#### E. CONVERGENCE OF TRIBULATION-TYPE DYNAMICS:

**NOTE:** The term ‘convergence’ means a series of things coming together or intersecting in our time. For example, when you see Christmas decorations going up, Thanksgiving is just around the corner.

1. The call for “globalism:”

- Many world leaders are appealing *right now* for a New World Order.
- Some world leaders have even stated the world needs “one man to follow.”
- Prince Charles recently talked about this “one man” and added that “trillions and trillions of dollars” needed to be at his disposal, as well as a “military-like” strategy to accomplish what he would need to do.
- President Biden recently said there is emerging now a New World Order, and America needs to lead it.
- The Bible says that during the Tribulation globalism will be the political system. It will indeed be a New World Order and will indeed be led by a single figure known as the antichrist.
- We are seeing appeals for that kind of governing structure and that kind of leader now, whereas we were not even five years ago.

2. Worldwide prejudice against Israel (most obvious in the UN):

- The UN has voted to condemn Israel FAR MORE than any other nation in the world-- in some cases, by almost a 20 to 1 ratio.
- The UN has passed more resolutions against Israel than countries like N. Korea, China, Iran, Venezuela, and all the other places where thugs and dictators routinely violate human rights and murder hundreds of thousands.
- The bias against Israel is a hatred born of spiritual depravity and will continue to escalate and gain full bloom in the Tribulation as the Bible says in **(Zech. 12:4)**: *“On that day, when all the nations of the earth gather against her, I will*

*make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who would heave it away will be severely injured”*

3. The conditioning for the Mark of the Beast:

- A lot of people wonder if the COVID vaccine is the Mark of the Beast.
- Reasons for this speculation include:
  - Strong coercion to take it (and the boosters).
  - Severe repercussions and social isolation if one does not.
  - Inability to travel or go to certain places and events if one does not.
  - The self-evident prejudice against folks who do not take the jab.
- But the present vaccine is NOT the Mark of the Beast. Scripture says that the MOB is not introduced until the halfway point of the seven-year Tribulation.
- I feel the present vaccine dynamic IS a social conditioning mechanism. It IS starting the process and the widespread conformity patterns that will ultimately be expressed in the MOB.

4. Other convergence-related issues:

- Widespread escalation in earthquakes
- Anticipation of food shortages and famines
- Big surge in wars
- Violence and conflict between ethnic groups
- Hatred of Christians
- Intolerance and suppression of truth/elevation of deception
- The Olivet Discourse describes these as being dynamics of the Tribulation, but we are seeing them escalating now.
- These developments can be likened to the Christmas decorations going up. We see them, so we know Thanksgiving is near.

**F. THE TIMEPIECE OF ISRAEL:**

**NOTE:** “If you get Israel right, you get your eschatology right.” – Dr. John MacArthur

1. It all starts with 1948 and the War of Independence:

**(Cf. Isaiah 66:8)** *“Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall a land be born in one day? Shall a nation be brought forth in one moment? For as soon as Zion was in labor she brought forth her children.”*

Israel’s rebirth into her ancient homeland was a benchmark moment in Biblical prophecy--those Christian leaders who downplay this are both ignorant and biased.

2. It continued with the War of 1967 (a.k.a. “The Six Day War”):

Israel had sweeping military success once again against overwhelming odds, and she regained the Old City of Jerusalem and the Golan Heights among other territories.

3. Israel’s significance in Biblical prophecy will continue (and I believe, soon) with the following conflicts:

- The destruction of Elam (western portion of Iran) (*Cf. Jer. 49:34-38*)
- The destruction of Damascus in Syria (*Cf. Isaiah 17:1, 4-6, 14, etc.*)
- The war Israel will have with all her neighbors (*Cf. Psalms 83*)
- The War of Gog and Magog (*Cf. Ezek. 38 & 39*) (NOTE: We see alliances now forming between Russia, Iran, Turkey, and Libya--some of the main players)
- Bottom line: keep your eye on Israel. It's the most important criterion of all.

## G. THE VARIOUS AGES OF BIBLICAL HISTORY:

**NOTE:** Many Bible scholars--those in both ancient and modern times--believe that world history will occupy roughly seven millennia (or seven 1,000-year blocks). After some significant study on this issue, I, too, hold that view.

1. This template corresponds to various Biblical patterns; for example, the seven days of Creation Week. The number seven represents "completeness" or "wholeness."
2. Other passages support this view:
  - (*Psalms 90:4*) "A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night."
  - (*2 Peter 3:8*) "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."
  - This latter verse sits within a context describing the future Day of the Lord and the destruction of this earth in final judgement, so there is a direct connection to these very matters.
3. According to this view, we have:
  - 2000 years from the creation to the call of Abraham,
  - 2000 years between Abraham and Christ,
  - 2000 years in the Christian age (a.k.a. "the age of grace" or "the church age")
  - A thousand-year kingdom age period, the future Millennial Kingdom (mentioned in numerous OT passages and six times in *Revelation 20:2-7*).
  - A total of 7,000 years.
4. If this idea is legitimate--and I believe that it is--then we are very close to the conclusion of the "age of grace." How can we better understand this?
  - Jesus was crucified and the church started in 32 AD (maybe 33 AD).
  - 2,000 years from that point would be 2032.
  - That would seem to be the final year of the Tribulation, AFTER which point the Millennial Kingdom would begin.
  - Implications: Back up from 2032 seven years to account for The Tribulation, and that brings the start of the Tribulation to somewhere around 2025.
  - IF that is all true--and again, the Biblical arguments for this seem to be strong--then the Rapture would be sometime between now and 2025.

5. Another very important Biblical passage which seems to lend significant support to all this is **Hosea 6:1-3**: *“Come, and let us return to the Lord; For He has torn, but He will heal us; He has stricken, but He will bind us up. After two days He will revive us; On the third day He will raise us up, that we may live in His sight. Let us know, let us pursue the knowledge of the Lord. His going forth is established as the morning; He will come to us like the rain, Like the latter and former rain to the earth.”*
- This is a prophetic lament of the Jewish people. They are stricken with grief over their broken and torn condition, but they look forward to a time when they will be healed and restored.
  - The language of their time of healing is clearly Millennial in nature (i.e. “we may live in His sight”.)
  - The “former and latter rain” language is best understood to reference Jesus’ first coming and His second coming.
  - In this passage are two specific timeframes: “two days” and “the third day.”
  - The two days correspond well to the two thousand years of the age of grace-- the time during which the Jewish people have had a partial hardening of their hearts according to **Romans 11:25**:  
*“I do not want you to be ignorant of this mystery, brothers and sisters, so that you may not be conceited: Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in.”*
  - The third day corresponds well to the one-thousand-year Millennial Kingdom and the promises to Israel.
  - In my own estimation, this is beyond coincidence. It is intentional and it is prophetic, and it is there for us to be watchful.

#### H. THE JUBILEE CYCLE:

**NOTE:** The Jubilee Cycles have ALWAYS had a particular focus on events with the Jews.

1. God set times, cycles, and all calendar issues in motion, and He was very specific.
2. The Jubilee cycle was a specific time period, and a prescriptive way of looking at time, that God gave to Israel on their way to The Promised Land. **Leviticus 25:2-4** reads:  
*‘When you come into the land which I give you, then the land shall keep a sabbath to the LORD. Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather its fruit; but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of solemn rest for the land, a sabbath to the LORD. You shall neither sow your field nor prune your vineyard.’* This passage defines the 50-year Jubilee cycle: 49 years which are seven blocks of seven years, followed by the 50<sup>th</sup> year known as “the year of Jubilee.”
3. The **Leviticus** passage states this was all to begin when the nation of Israel first entered the promised land, and we read when EXACTLY that was in **Joshua 4:19**:  
*“On the tenth day of the first month, the people went up from the Jordan and camped at Gilgal on the eastern border of Jericho.”*

- So, we know when exactly the month and day was that Israel entered the Promised Land. The bigger question is what year was that?
  - Most scholars land on 1406 BC (if there is any debate, it's the year before or the year after, but for our purposes today, we'll go with 1406 BC).
  - Now, if you calculate out all the Jubilee Cycles from that point (remember, God's Israel-centric point-of-view), then the 70<sup>th</sup> Jubilee Cycle starts in 2025.
  - This is the same timeframe we see with the 1,000-year ages of human history.
4. If you wonder about the significance of the Jubilee Cycle and the Year of Jubilee concerning the Jews' times past and present, Author and Rabbi Jonathan Cahn identifies the following events as just a partial list of things that occurred on a Year of Jubilee or in direct association with the Jubilee cycle:
- The decree of Cyrus, setting the Jews at liberty after 70 years of captivity, fell on a Jubilee!
  - God gave David the Davidic Covenant, the promise of the Messiah from his lineage, on a Jubilee year!
  - The 70 weeks prophecy in ***Daniel Ch. 9*** began on a Jubilee year.
  - The Balfour Declaration of 1917 was when the British Empire pledged the land of Israel to the Jewish people—a Jubilee.
  - The Six-Day War of 1967 in which Israel regained Jerusalem was a Jubilee year.
  - And 50 years from that--another Jubilee year--was 2017, the year President Donald Trump officially recognized Jerusalem as the Jewish capital (first time in over 2,000 years).

### **CONCLUSION:**

Today's lesson provided insights into the timeframe of the Rapture. Because of the convergence of signs which are gathering force and momentum and point to the onset of the Tribulation, we should be—AND ARE CALLED TO BE—expectant. While we do not specifically know when the Rapture will occur, we do know the Bible tells us it will be before the Tribulation.

Nowhere today have I said I know the day or the hour. However, the Bible says we should understand the general timing of the Lord's return, and today's lesson—hopefully!—has given you a few ways and means to do that.

Other useful studies include:

1. The Essene Calendar (Dr. Ken Johnson has some excellent YouTube Videos)
2. The 490-year cycles
3. The times of the Gentiles, etc.

Remember, when we start to see Christmas decorations go up, we know that Thanksgiving is just around the corner.



